

never happened before. I thank all of them for doing that. We would not have accomplished that without some very late night meetings, and Enrique Gonzalez was always there along with John Baseline. He will never forgive me for that, and Enrique will never let me forget it, but they did extraordinary work on that part of the bill and other parts of the bill as well.

I thank the leader's staff—Serena Hoy—the Judiciary Committee staff, and the floor staff.

As I say, I have submitted names for the RECORD, but there are names here that are too often not mentioned on the floor of the Senate, so I want to read these names. These are the schedulers for the eight Senators who worked on this bill so hard for so many months.

The day I knew we were actually going to get this done was the day JOHN MCCAIN said in his office some months ago that unless we begin to meet three times a week, we are never going to get this done. As the Presiding Officer knows, that is an enormous commitment of time, to meet three times a week, and we did it week in and week out. Sometimes we weren't even in Washington but back home on the telephone, but we carved out the time to do it, and that could not have happened without the schedulers in our offices—from my perspective, certainly not without Kristin Mollet, who is my extraordinary scheduler. I told her at our first meeting—I don't know if I was interviewing her or she was interviewing me; it was probably a little bit of both—that the scheduler is the heart of the operation. If the schedule doesn't work, the wheels come off and nothing else works. Kristin Mollet has done an extraordinary job getting us through this process.

In no particular order, let me please say thank you to Alice James, with Senator GRAHAM; Megan Runyan, with Senator FLAKE; Rob Kelly, with Senator MENENDEZ; Claire Reuschel, with Senator DURBIN; Jessica Bonfiglio, in Senator RUBIO's office; and a very special thanks to Alex Victor, with Senator SCHUMER, and Ellen Cahill in Senator MCCAIN's office. We could not have done this without them.

In the story I told before about when I was a superintendent and working in business, not in politics—I had never run for office before when I took this job—I mentioned that the key is finding people a lot better at doing their job than you would ever be at doing their job. Well, that has never been more true than it has been in the Senate, where the quality of the work we do depends entirely on the quality of the staff we have. So I want to say thank you to all the Senate staff for their efforts.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT ANNIVERSARY

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, this Independence Day will mark the 47th anni-

versary of the enactment of the Freedom of Information Act, FOIA. For more than four decades, FOIA has translated our great American values of openness and accountability into practice, by guaranteeing access to government information. In so doing, this premier open government law has helped to guarantee the public's "right to know" for generations of Americans.

The anniversary of the enactment of FOIA is a timely opportunity to take stock of the progress we have made in improving transparency in government, as well as the challenges that remain when citizens seek information from the Federal Government. Today, we are witnessing an erosion of the public's trust in the institutions of government. According to a recent study by the Pew Research Center, trust in the Federal Government is at an historic low. In addition, a majority of Americans believe that the Federal Government threatens their personal rights and freedoms, according to the study.

To be sure, there are many reasons for the decline in the public's trust in the Federal Government. But more importantly, there is a time-proven cure for this troubling trend—an increase in government transparency.

To accomplish this, our Federal agencies must commit to the spirit, as well as the letter, of the President's pledge to keep the Federal Government open and accessible to the American people. While the Obama administration has made significant progress in improving the FOIA process, too many of our Federal agencies are not keeping up with the FOIA reforms that Congress enacted in the OPEN Government Act. A recent audit conducted by the National Security Archive found that more than half of all Federal agencies have not updated their Freedom of Information Act regulations to comply with this law.

Our Federal Government must also do a better job of balancing the need to protect sensitive government information with the equally important need to ensure public confidence in our national security policies. According to the Associated Press, during the past year, the Obama administration withheld more information for national security reasons in response to FOIA requests than at any other time since the President took office. Of course no one would quibble with the notion that some government information must be kept confidential. But as we have seen in the unfolding events surrounding the unauthorized disclosure of information about the NSA's secret electronic surveillance programs, excessive government secrecy can harm both the public's trust and our own national interests. That is why I have proposed and cosponsored legislation that will provide for greater openness and public reporting with regard to these broad surveillance authorities, as well as the legal opinions that interpret those statutes.

As we mark another FOIA anniversary, I join Americans from across the political spectrum in celebrating all that this law has come to symbolize about our vibrant democracy. After four decades, we have much to celebrate about this open government law. We in Congress also have much more work to do to help ensure that FOIA's values of openness and accountability remain in place for future generations of Americans.

AFRICA VISIT

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I rise to discuss President Obama's trip to Africa that began yesterday. There is no shortage of important issues to address on the continent, from continued instability in eastern Congo, Mali, and Somalia, to autocratic government in Zimbabwe, Sudan, and the Gambia.

Yet there is also another story to tell in Africa—that of a growing and more prosperous middle class. In fact, in the past 10 years, 6 of the world's fastest growing economies were located in Sub-Saharan Africa and in the next decade, 7 of the top 10 will also be in Africa. A growing middle class is important not only for political stability and economic well-being, but also for American businesses that export—or want to export—to Africa.

It is an issue I have been trying to draw attention to for some time and one I am glad that the President has on his trip agenda, including by having U.S. Export Import Bank President Fred Hochberg along on his trip.

You see, every time I visit Africa I am struck by the presence of China—Chinese companies, Chinese products, Chinese workers, Chinese roads and bridges. It is not a coincidence.

China has a ravenous appetite for natural resources and also sees the great potential to sell Chinese goods to the burgeoning African market. And China has a strategy. It is aggressively investing resources and energy on the continent. It is offering low interest loans that cannot be refused.

I can remember a meeting a few years ago with the late Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles. Our meeting was almost over and then I asked about China. Meles went on for at least another 30 minutes. He told me what so many others have told me. Africa wants American products and investment—and the business, labor, and environmental standards that come with them—but America doesn't seem to have a plan. China, India and others do. The loss is ours in American jobs and influence in Africa. And the African people lose by not having access to high quality American goods and services.

I can also tell you American companies are eager to get into the African market, but often face a private finance system that is stuck thinking about Africa through the prism of its past—wars, famine, strongmen dictators. I have met with them—American companies big and small—and